20734

March 27, 1965

Dear Sid:

I hope your blood pressure doesn't rise when you see a letter from me. I am writing to let you know I have heard nothing from Ivan, have received no copy of the Brown ms., and have done some thinking and come to some conclusions.

Lil was unwilling to go as far as I offered to. Partly because of her feeling, partly because I know Ivan told you things that are not true, partly because I remember the story of his turning down the prize-winning book you referred to him, and largely because we have what I believe is a valuable property, I arranged to have a copy of my manuscript read by a professional editor. I have reason to believe she is competent. She has had thirty years of professional experience and was a total stranger to me.

Today she told me I have a very good book, that it is well and logically organized, that it is publishable as it stands (meaning any competent publisher could take it and with a minimum of work have it ready to print) and should be very profitable. At that I asked her about editing it. It was her estimate that she could do this in 24 hours and that the amount of retyping that would be required would take about three days.

This is hardly what Ivan told you. But it makes sense of the refusal or inability of Ivan's people to specify what was wrong with the manuscript when I asked. As I told you, the early pages of the ms. will show that there was no problem with the minor changes Ivan's people wanted to make. They are all there and they were accomplished without dispute. We also agreed on an outline when they re-outlined the book. That, too, was essentially my ms.

Lil and I have talked this over and we feel that it is time for Ivan to do what he agreed to do. We have scrupulously lived up to our part. This includes both the nature and contents of the book and the deadline. I will, in about a week, have an edited copy of the ms. ready for him. At that time he can read it and, if he likes and wants it, it is his. If he doesn't, he can return it to me and release me from obligation to him. I will be reasonable about corrections he wants to make, as I have been and as I assure you I will continue to be. But at this point, unless he is prepared to show that I have an unacceptable ms., we both feel that there is everything to be lost and nothing to be gained by further delay. If he wants it, we will want

a contract as you discussed it, without delay.

He has delayed, and I think I can now show (not that I believe I'll have to or want to) that there is and has been no satisfactory reason for it. This delay has been costly to us in many ways and may jeopardize our property. What his reason for delaying is, I don't know, but I feel we are in no way responsible. It is now five weeks since he got the last of the ms. It is a month and a half since he got an appreciable part of the book, six of the projected 14 chapters and the table of contents, which included an explanation of the contents of those chapters not then mailed. He had no complaints.

The manuscript I delivered to Ivan is what we agreed to, both in form and content. He was to have clean copy about the middle of February and the book was to have been in print a month later. He advertised it (without my name but with the title I had given the book) for publication in May. At every step I have been in touch with him and have done what he asked. I have also depended upon him to keep his word, and as of now I still do.

Our agreement of December 15, 1964, in the form of a letter from him, witnessed by his business manager, John Ledes, and accepted by me, reads:

> "This is to confirm to you that our meeting of December 15 and the statements made therein are of a confidential nature and we assure you that such information will not be revealed or otherwise communicated.
>
> "In the event we cannot reach a decision to publish your book on The Warren Commission Report, I want to confirm to you that this firm will as a consequence bar itself from publishing any book on this Report, directly or indirectly, except with your prior approval.
>
> "In consideration of the above, without committing the author to any arrangement, he will guarantee us a First Refusal."

I cannot and do not pretend special knowledge of the practices in this field. I think this is clear, however.

From what printing arrangements were made in my presence, I believe Ivan can still get this book out in May if he really wants to. I believe it will be profitable to him and to us if he does. Our subsequent agreement of January 4, 1965, uses the words "earliest possible" to describe publication date. That suits me, for speed is a necessity from our point of view. This book is clearly my property. This is specified in our second agreement. Brown was to have been the writer only.

I want to make no problems for Ivan. I don't want him to print a book he doesn't want to print. But I also don't want him to delay further and further endanger our property. Actually, I have looked out for his interests all along. For example, had it not been for me, he'd have the Brown ms. set in type and useless to him, without anyone having read it first!

So far as Brown is concerned, Ivan was to have acted as my agent in dealing with him. He was to have drawn up a contract between Brown and me, and he didn't (nor, for that matter, has he ever drafted the contract he was supposed to have done the day after our January meeting, and I have asked for this on a number of occasions). Both Ivan and Leder agreed for me to write the book, and both said they'd pay Brown off. Perhaps I am wrong, but Brown has not kept his agreement with me. I believe this is amply recorded. He voluntarily withdrew and I accepted his withdrawal, and this is also a matter of record. If he is going to sue me, let him. I don't think he will. But at this point our entire property is in danger and unless something is done it may have little or no value. I pretend no knowledge of the legalities, but I don't believe Brown will sue Ivan, either. Nor is he going to blackmail me.

We both hope you do not think we are wrong, but this is the way we feel. We do appreciate the time and trouble you have gone to for us and hope, when the book is published, to see that you have more than our appreciation. As a matter of fact, if Ivan decided to back out, we would like you to arrange for the ms. to go to another publisher. We are still bewildered by this whole thing.

I have arranged for the making of photocopies of the ms. I cannot afford to, but after this experience I don't think we can afford not to, either. We will have a full extra copy and wish you would be able to read it.

Finding out as I did today that I do have a good ms. has really shaken me up, for it makes me wonder about what happened and what was behind what happened while I was in New York. I hope it hasn't disturbed me to the point that I haven't expressed myself clearly.

Sidney, you have been wonderful, as always, and I just don't know how to say how much we appreciate it. We both hate to add our burdens to those you already have, but we are grateful that you have done so. Without you, I don't know who we'd have been able to turn to.

As of now, I hope to be able to take the ms. to the editor Monday and get it back Tuesday night. I have never been able to read the entire thing carefully, and want to be certain there are no accidental inaccuracies. I have gone over about a third and will finish it by Monday if your place doesn't again become Grand Central. I expect it back in time for Lil to retype what is necessary by Friday night, we can keep our obligation in Salisbury Saturday, have the photocopying done Monday, and I can be in New York Tuesday. At least, this looks possible now. If I can make it sooner, I will.

Once again, our sincerest thanks.

Sincerely,

Harold